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BEHIND SEXY VOICE **P.3**

TRAVEL HOT SPRINGS, HILLS AND
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FOOD BOXED BEIJING SWEETS FOR
YOUR NEW YEAR'S GIFTS **P.8**

今日北京

BEIJING TODAY

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GIVING UP THE PAST

EARLY SUCCESS CAN RUIN AN ARTIST.
AFTER AN EARLY CAREER IN ILLUSTRATION, LI SK FENG
GAVE EVERYTHING UP TO REBOOT HER CAREER ABROAD
AND FIND INSPIRATION. **P.4**



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ENTERTAINMENT



Photos by CFP & douban.com

'Running Man' Tumbles Headfirst into Big Screen Failure

BY DIAO DIAO

On January 30, *Running Man* became the latest in a series of Chinese TV shows being adapted for the big screen. Like its predecessors, it lost something the transition.

But for anyone whose mind was powered by logic instead of red stacks of 100-yuan notes, the approaching train wreck should have been obvious: reality shows make for poor movies.

Running Man was originally a Korean reality show formula purchased by Zhejiang TV. The quality of the domestic version was ensured by a cooperation that

gave the Korean production unit temporary oversight. Little was changed save for the addition of some elements borrowed from famous Chinese literature.

Running Man invited seven popular celebrities including Angelababy, Deng Chao, Wang Baoqiang, Chen He, Wang Zulan, Li Chen and Zheng Kai to compete in various tasks with minimal audience aid. It also featured guest appearances by popular actors and singers, and all of them were separated into groups to compete.

While the formula did not break any new ground, it did provide for

some fun discussion.

The film of *Running Man* is something else entirely.

The writers attempted to create a story framework that would involve cramming a cast into the popular reality show setup. Unfortunately, the best they could manage were a group of brothers and sisters split up between different cities.

The cast includes all the go-to personalities of uninspired Chinese writers: cooks, rich heirs and gaming addicts. They are united only by an anonymous message informing them they have won a trip to a Sanya resort.

But upon arriving in Sanya, they discover just what kind of horrible movie they've walked into.

Two years ago, Hunan TV attempted to drag its *Where Are We Going, Dad?* reality show to the big screen. That mistake should have been a free lesson for Zhejiang TV's greedy producers.

In the first two weeks since its debut, *Running Man*'s score on Douban has plummeted to an abysmally low 3.0 with so many down votes that even the water army can't keep it afloat. The comments were quick to spot the film's most obvious and fatal flaw: even in a world of pre-scripted "reality" shows, a pre-scripted reality show movie goes beyond what any fan can accept.

Other viewers pointed out how media scandals surrounding the film's cast resemble advertisements in retrospect.

Chen He apologized in January for divorcing his wife of 14 years. He was also exposed being the third wheel of another marriage. Angry fans flooded his Weibo account and urged him to quit the *Running Man* team.

A few days later, Li Chen was exposed as being in a relationship with Fan Bingbing, the actress who played Wu Meiniang and her breasts in SARFT's heavily censored cleavage-oriented TV drama.

That so many *Running Man* actors were involved in these and other scandals have cynical viewers crying foul. ■

The Qingming Shanghe Tu Code

BY DIAO DIAO

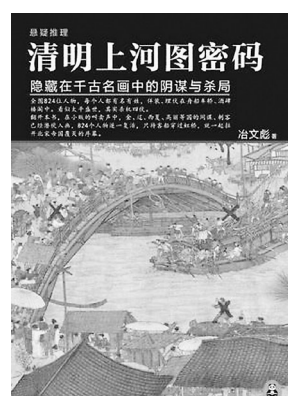
Along the River During the Qingming Festival, or Qingming Shanghe Tu in the original Chinese, is one of China's ten most famous paintings. As the masterwork of Northern Song artist Zhang Zeduan, the epic scroll records life among the different social classes of Bianjing, the dynasty's capital.

The 5.28 meters long work includes 814 people, 73 animals and more than 50 vehicles. Its architecture and clothing reveals a surprisingly prosperous society.

But there may be more secret plots buried within the scenes, according to *The Qingming Shanghe Tu Code* published last month.

Author Ye Wenbiao is a fiction writer with an interest in Chinese history and deductive reasoning. His *Ren Pi Lunyu* released in 2010 was based on a similar concept.

After the release of his last novel, Ye began spending much of his time in Kaifeng, Henan



province, the modern incarnation of Bianjing. Over the course of three years he developed a storyline based on the painting and the city's history. His last two years were spent writing the book.

In the book, all the people in the painting



are given names and roles in the story. Some are espionage agents or hired killers from China's neighboring Khitan, Tangut, Jurchen and Korean states. It spins a story of complex political intrigue hiding behind the painting's prosperous facade.

The Northern Song Dynasty fell within a few years of the painting's completion when the Jurchens invaded. Their conquest wiped out many of the scenes depicted in the painting.

The booming market, the disguised killers and the miserable ending of Northern Song in the book tell the whole history.

Although the book is steeped in history, readers said its language was easy and its story simple to follow and understand.

But historians worry that, as with all great historical fiction, there's a chance that readers might confuse Ye's novel tale with fact. While his characters may be fanciful creations, many of the events appear to be alarmingly real.

Readers called it a surprisingly vivid story based on such a serene picture. Ye's five independent stories begin separate and come together through his deductive writing. ■

MUSIC

H.C.R. Adds Some Maturity to its 'Sexy' Voice



Photos by Hard Candy Revolution

BY DIAO DIAO

Originally founded by North China University of Technology students Qingzi, Xiaoyu, Kane and Ma Hang, Hard Candy Revolution is back on the indie circuit. The reunion happened last June when lead singer Qingzi came back from studying abroad and the band replaced Ma Hang with Xiao Peng, a professional drummer.

"Peng's professional background really helped bring us together. His participation helped us to cooperate and find better ways to express ourselves," said Xiao Yu, the bass player.

H.C.R. has its roots in a cover band called Sleeping Pill that started in 2013. As Sleeping Pill, the group made heavy use of its female vocalist Qingzi to cover songs by The Pretty Reckless, Evanescence and Nightwish. Qingzi's voice is an unusual blend of her musical influences such as Lizzy Hale and Alissa White-Gluz.

By the end of the year Sleeping Pill was writing its own music. The first few songs offered little in the way of genre cohesion, but the group slowly gravitated toward hard rock and punk.

Its Hard Candy Revolution moniker is a nod to the band's sound. "We play hard rock, our singer's voice is sweet, and our reunion was like a revolution that helped us to mature," Yu said.

H.C.R. is unusual among Chinese hard rock bands for its heavy use of electronic effects. While many groups tend to sacrifice rhythm when incorporating digital tools, Peng's driving percussion and Qingzi's sexy vocals make for some rather interesting compositions.

"Guitarist Kane always puts together a few

riffs and sends them out over email. We respond, emailing in our own bits to slowly piece together the song," Yu said. "Rehearsal is when we sit down, try all the pieces together and see what works and what we can record."

But finding time for rehearsals can be a battle.

Qingzi works at China Radio International, Kane is still a student, Yu is a teacher and Peng is often occupied with other gigs.

It's hard to imagine the mild-mannered teacher Yu as the bass player in a crazy rock band, but he says both sides of his identity are essential.

"Personally, I like classical music when I'm alone. But rock is something I do with the group," he says. Yu tries to introduce his students to classical music as he considers it fundamental to really understand and play music.

When listening to H.C.R. reflect on their career, it becomes clear they are part of the pro-mainstream indie movement that has been growing in China's rock scene.

"A lot of people misunderstand 'mainstream' and equate it to commercialization. But it's more about following a mature model and tradition. The indie scene these days seems to be more about personality than music," Yu says. "Then again, as indies, our listeners are probably the kinds of people we would get along with in everyday life."

The band is working its way back onto the local cafe and bar circuit with more performances to follow throughout 2015.

Its song "Let it Go" was recorded for the 2013-2015 Super School Fighter Collection. ■

LIVE SHOW ROUNDUP

Beijing boasts one of the world's most vibrant indie music scenes. Support our local artists with a trip to one of this week's live performances!



Lone Band @ School Bar

On the Valentine's Day, Lone Band will have a session show at School Bar. It's also the warm up for their 2015 national tour. Founded in 2006, the band has six members playing accordion, cello, guitar and drums.

🕒 February 14, 9:30-11:30 pm
📍 53 Wudaoying Hutong, Dongcheng
💎 Free

Dayang @ Slow Living

Dayang is a folk singer. When other singers such as Yang Kun and Wan Xiaoli were headed for the capital to find their fortune, Dayang went west. He performed for many people on his journey, including workers at electric factories and farmers in small villages. Many of his songs are inspired by the impressive scenery of China's western interior.

🕒 February 14, 8:30-10:30 pm
📍 73 Daxing Hutong, Dongcheng
💎 30 yuan (pre sale), 40 yuan (at door)



Valentine's Day Party @ MAO Live House

MAO Live House is inviting Backfire, Self Portrait, Yongdongji, Time Capsule, Mr. Honey and Chaliangfen Band to a one-night party. The venue is aiming to have single men and women come and join the music night, but couples are welcome too.

🕒 February 14, 8:30-11:30 pm
📍 111 Guloudong Dajie, Dongcheng
💎 80 yuan (pre sale), 100 yuan (at door)

Suliaoshu Huang Yong @ Lanxi Bar

To Huang Yong, Valentine's Day is just another weekend. Huang Yong wrote his first song in 1995. He's back after 20 years with more nostalgic music full of memories.

🕒 February 14, 9-11:30 pm
📍 183 Jiugulou Dajie, Xicheng
💎 28 yuan (pre sale), 38 yuan (at door)

ARTISTS



Illustration for the New York Times



Vienna

Illustrator Reboots Her Art Journey Abroad



Goddess's New Clothes



Illustration for Cosmic Seed

BY LYNNE WANG

Few things can poison an artist's development quite like early fame. And when fame comes knocking, it takes a lot to cast it away and reboot one's art career in an unfamiliar world.

Illustrator Lisk Feng made that tough decision three years ago when she left her hometown behind to build her skills and begin a new career in the US.

Feng was born and grew up in Haining, Zhejiang province. Her mother, also an artist, encouraged Feng to study violin, clarinet and choir as a child.

"But I found illustration was my true love," she says. "After passing the entrance exam for senior high, I started to play an online doodling game and found the fun of painting. I gave up my violin and online games to embrace art."

A combination of natural talent and dedicated practice brought Feng to the attention of the art community, and she began to serialize her illustrations in teen magazines. She published *Tong*, her first album of paintings, while still a sophomore in 2011.

Known for her warm and sweet style and moving stories, Feng won loads of adolescent fans. In the following two years, she was busy with autographs sessions for her albums.

"People were already calling me an influential and successful illustrator, but that label really confused me," Feng says. The approval and economic independence showed her what could succeed in China.

"But at the same time, I felt like a machine rather than an artist who poured her energy into creating better works," she says.

For Feng, saying goodbye to her past "success" and starting an art journey in a new environment was the best way to grow. After graduating from China Academy of Fine Arts, Feng flew to Baltimore to pursue a master's of fine art in Illustration of Practice at the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Compared to the dreamy and delicate style of her earlier works, Feng's work since arriving in the US has become concise and ironic.

In her 2013 series *Flowers and Girls*, Feng invites viewers into the soft inner world of modern females. While flowers may be a



Adrift

source of happiness for a young girl, a mature woman cares more about whether or not she is more gorgeous than the flowers.

In one of her editorial cartoons published in the *New York Times*, Feng depicts the dilemma of digital technology and the Internet. In the picture, PCs, TVs, smartphones and tablets surround a tall man who kneels on ground while attempting to deal with life and work at the same time. The ludicrous scene is the norm in the digital age, and Feng's concise representation makes viewers question whether digital technology can really simplify people's lives.

Feng also hoists up herself as the star of her creations. In *Fat Ladies*, Feng records her free life in the US and how she learned to accept and appreciate her own beauty as an overweight woman.

"I was mocked by lots of mean men because of my weight. I often wore men's clothes to hide my low self-esteem. Now I'm confident enough to face my weight and use my works to tell other fat ladies that they can be gorgeous," Feng says.

Finding her confidence may be Feng's biggest change since living abroad. After graduating from MICA in Baltimore last year, Feng moved to New York to work as a freelance illustrator.

The competitive environment has put her through bouts of depression, but Feng has become a regular contributor to mainstream media since getting her first editorial cartoon published in *Fast Company Magazine* last August.

"Unlike China, where illustration is a low position, it seems everyone in New York loves illustrations. You can see them in advertisements, subways and on the covers of many novels," she said. ■

liskfeng.com

weibo.com/p/1035051743572345



Pet

Photos by Lisk Feng

A TRAVEL



Photo by xialv.com

Romantic Weekend Trip to Changping

BY LI RUIQI

Even if it's too late for Valentine's Day, you can still enjoy a romantic weekend amid the hot springs and scenic farms of north Beijing. Changping District is home to one of the Top 10 hot springs in China, a Ming Dynasty mausoleum and dozens of strawberry farms.



Photo by oilboss.cn.jpg



Photo by queqiaoba.com

Day 1: Hot Springs on Mt. Xiaotang

Chinese geologist Li Daoyuan discovered the geothermal resources of Mt. Xiaotang in AD 550. Bathers swear by the hot springs' ability to improve circulation and relieve arthritis.

The springs were favored by royals and served as winter palace during the Qing Dynasty. Today they are still one of the top hot springs in the country for their mineral-rich waters that soften and soothe the skin. Many visitors come to "drive out the chill" and relax after a busy week in downtown Beijing.

Massage service is available at a nearby spa in Jiuhuashan Zhuang. The hotel offers a full gym, karaoke rooms, video game karcades and bowling alley. It's the ideal place for a family trip. Learn more at jiuhuashanzhuang.org.

Transportation

- Drive along Litang Road north to the Daliushu roundabout. Turn right and continue a half-kilometer to Jiuhuashan Zhuang.
- Take Lines 5 or 13 of the subway to Lishuiqiao Station. Board Bus 984 to reach Jiuhuashan Zhuang.

Tips

- Wait 40 minutes after eating before using the hot spring.
- Do not drink alcohol while bathing.
- Remove your contact lenses before using the hot spring.
- Gradually move from the cooler pools to the hotter pools to avoid catching a cold.
- Do not soak for more than 40 minutes at a time.

Day 2: Hiking in Mt. Mang National Park

Mt. Mang National Park is part of the Yan Mountain range. It was named for its resemblance to a python. The park's 170 kinds of trees make it an important green lung for suburban Beijing.

Hikers come to challenge what is the longest staircase in Beijing with 3,666 steps to the observation deck. Brave the climb to enjoy one of the best views of the Ming Dynasty mausoleum. Even hundreds of years after its construction ended, the mausoleum looks as though it dominates the valley.

Halfway up is a giant Buddha that stands 9.99 meters and weighs 3,000 tons. It is purported to be the biggest Buddha in the Huabei area.

Transportation

Mt. Mang National Park is about 20 kilometers from Jiuhuashan Zhuang. It takes 30 minutes to drive there if you follow



Changcui Lu and turn right at the intersection with Mangshan Lu. It costs about 60 yuan to get there by taxi.

Tips

- It takes about 4 hours to finish the hiking. The best time is between 9 am and 3:30 pm.
- Bring a coat because it is often cold and windy on the observation deck.
- Take a thermos to store some hot water or coffee for the trip.



Photos by xialv.com

Day 3: Strawberry Picking in Xingshou

Changping produces 60 percent of Beijing's strawberries: 80 percent of those are grown in Xingshou County.

Clear air and fertile soil allow Xingshou to produce especially sweet and juicy strawberries. The biggest strawberries are usually hidden deep in the bush, and trips to go hand picking are a popular summer activity. Thanks to greenhouses, it's possible to plan a hand-picking trip even during the winter.

Strawberries cost 30 to 50 yuan per 500 grams. Farmers will weigh the strawberries and help you wash them.

It's best to avoid eating strawberries while picking since the fruits may contain pesticide residue.

Don't wash the berries you plan to take home. Store them in a cool container to prevent any from rotting on the trip back.

Transportation

Xingshou County is about 23 kilometers from Mt. Mang National Park. Drive south along Mangshan Lu to Cuichang Lu, then head east along Changjin Lu. Most of the strawberry gardens are by the roadside.



Photo by blog.lotour.com



Photo by shijilongdi.com

Recommended Strawberry Gardens

Juanzi Strawberry Garden

➤ Changjing Lu, Xiying Village, Xingshou County
☎ 13716147628

Shufeng Strawberry Garden

➤ Xingzhuang Lu, Xiying Village, Xingshou County
☎ 13716466027 or 13910313093

Tianyi Strawberry Garden

➤ 100m north of the intersection of Ansi Lu and Changjin Lu, Xingshou County
☎ (010) 6172 1718

ETCETERA

Netspeak: Taiwanese Accents

BY DIAO DIAO

因为我宣你
所以不离开



Chinese is not only one of the most difficult languages to learn, it's also the language with the most dialects. Taiwanese is widely considered one of the most interesting of the bunch, and many popular saying are coined to imitate the pronunciation heard in the island's soaps.

Nánpiào

Nanpiao (男票) and nüpiao (女票) mean boyfriend and girlfriend respectively. While the normal words should be "nanpengyou" or "nupengyou," the Taiwanese accent is fast and exaggerated. Piao also has the meaning of ticket or money, and boyfriends are called nanpiao since they often end up doubling as their girlfriend's bank.

Nǐ Zào Ma

The phrase "Ni zao ma?" (你造吗) actually means "Do you know?" The zao stands in for the more normal "zhi

dao," which means "to know." Taiwanese speakers tend to have problems separating Z and ZH sounds. They also drop a lot of Ds, resulting in the contraction.



Wǒ Xuān Nǐ

This phrase "Wo xuan ni" (我宣你) actually means "I like you." It's fairly common to say "Wo xihuan ni," or "I like you," to express affection to a girl. But in the Taiwanese accent, xihuan ends up sounding a lot like "xuan". Today this phrase is usually used by friends to joke rather than for its more weighty original meaning. ■



WEEKLY TANGO



Tango studies at Tsinghua University's Academy of Art and Design.
For more comics, follow his Sina Weibo feed at [tangocartoon](#).

Ask Beijing Today

"Ask Beijing Today" is our weekly column that attempts to make life in China less confusing. You can email your own questions to ask@beijingtoday.com.cn.

Q. I'm about to begin my fifth year in Beijing and I'd like to apply for a green card. My wife is Chinese and I've been here on a family visa for the last three years. I own my apartment and am settled down. Could you point me to the latest procedures and requirements?

A. There are four ways a foreigner can qualify for permanent residence in

China. Based on what you've told us, you may qualify for the option that requires you to have been married to a Chinese national for the last five years while living and working in China.

You will need to provide proof that you own your home or have permission to stay in it indefinitely, proof of marriage, proof of no criminal record in China, proof of no criminal record in your home country, proof of taxes paid for the last three years, proof of stable income and a certificate from your bank showing that you have placed 100,000 yuan in a one-year time deposit.

The latest requirements can be obtained on a slip of paper from the visa

counter on the second floor of the Exit and Entry Bureau's office by Yonghegong.

Q. I'm looking for a carpenter to have some built-in cupboards and other furniture made to spec. Can you recommend someone who can come in and measure things, help with the design, build it and install it?

A. Welcome to one of the biggest headaches in Chinese carpentry! Very few companies employ people who will both accurately take measurements and accurately cut things to those measurements.

We cannot vouch for any carpenters in your area. However, you might try searching Ganji.com or 58City.com,

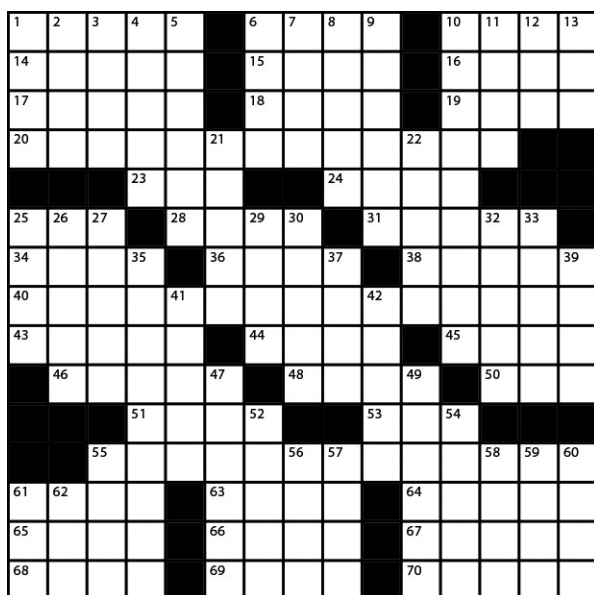
China's two largest classified portals. Try typing 木工 in the search box and filtering the results by location.

Q. I'm new here and I'm trying to find information about how to invite a family member for a visit.

A. Check the website of the Embassy of China in your home country. You will need to write a letter, specify the passport number and address of whomever you plan to invite, the dates of their visit, where they will go, who you are and what you're doing in China. They may also need a scan of your passport and visa.

It may be easier to apply for a regular tourist visa, book a refundable hotel room and go that route instead. ■

THE BEIJING TODAY CROSSWORD



BY SU DERUI

Across

1. Cleavage-hating Chinese censors
6. Visored cap
10. Gad about
14. Working class
15. Persia, today
16. Glow

17. Pillow filler
18. Anchovy containers
19. Entourage
20. Cry on a warship
23. Old exclamation
24. Flu symptom
25. Chitchat
28. Important Indian
31. Cronus or Oceanus
34. Ancient
36. Astronomical sighting
38. Cut again
40. Metaphors, for one example
43. Chute for logs
44. Old spelling of Xi'an
45. Pink, as a steak
46. Drain
48. "Nuts!"
50. After expenses
51. Pinocchio, at times
53. No longer working (abbr)
55. Parrot's cry in Treasure Island
61. Protein source

63. Giant
64. Voodoo
65. Sailor's jail
66. Romanov ruler
67. French miss
68. Sacks
69. Stiff bristle
70. Marbled meats

Down

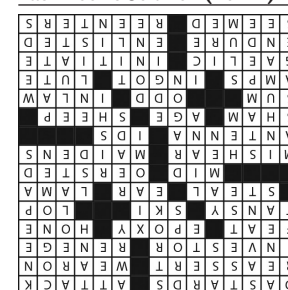
1. Guideline
2. Seed coat
3. Took the bus
4. Pet parasites
5. Abject fear
6. Social group
7. A Great Lake
8. Bamboo eater
9. Hexapod
10. Like Al Capone
11. Yours and mine
12. Common verb
13. Gullet
21. Macbeth or Macduff
22. Bird sound
25. Fishing hook
26. Nimble
27. High-ranking Muslim woman
29. Stick incense
30. Dodge
32. Geopolitical org
33. Mother of pearl
35. Spring Festival food
37. Distant
39. Stimulate
41. Stop working
42. Gobble
47. Pleasure crafts
49. Start golfing
52. Recycle
54. Leg bone
55. Discomfort
56. Mattress support
57. Pod vegetable
58. Money
59. Stop
60. He and she
61. UK channel
62. Historical period

Send your completed crossword within two weeks to get our next two issues mailed out for free!

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Q CLASSIFIEDS

MUSIC



Devils at the Crossroad: One Night Only!

Ready yourselves for February 13! The planets have aligned and Devils at the Crossroad will walk the Earth once more. Join them to welcome back the fallen hero of the underworld, Joris Zylberman, as he joins the Devils for a one night orgy of rock'n' roll damnation!

Together for the first time in more than a year, the Devils' lust for sinful delights are guaranteed to burn bright and burn loud throughout the night. So come drink your sins away, because at their altar, the Devils shall accept the unacceptable and redeem the unredeemable!

Hell's bells ring once more at Temple Bar!

⌚ 10 pm - 1 am, February 13
 ➔ Temple Bar, B202, 206 Gulou Dongdajie, Dongcheng
 ☎ 13161070713

FILM



This Life of Mine Film Screening and Discussion

Shi Hui's landmark 1950 film portrays five decades in the life of an ordinary Beijing policeman and his family. Although set in China's capital, the film remains local and detailed in its portrayal of the life of the city's ordinary citizens and the ways they're affected by changing times and politics.

Based on a novella by Beijing native Lao She, this personal epic is also marked by the oppression of its creators, with both Shi Hui and Lao She later committing suicide during Communist rule.

⌚ 6 pm - 9:30 pm, February 15
 ➔ Culture Yard, 10 Shique Hutong, Dongcheng
 💎 50 yuan (Culture Yard Students, 20 yuan); includes tea, coffee and popcorn
 ☎ (010) 8404 4166
 ✉ contact@cultureyard.net
 🌐 cultureyard.net

STAGE



Ballet Nacional de Cuba Swan Lake

This work was first presented at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow on February 20, 1877. A new staging of the ballet was performed on January 27, 1895 at the Mariinsky Theatre of St. Petersburg with acts I and III choreographed by Marius Petipa and acts II and IV choreographed with the participation of Lev Ivanov.

Alicia Alonso staged a new version in three acts with an epilogue that follows the third act without interruption.

In keeping with the Romantic aesthetics, the plot is a guileless story which includes prodigious transformations, magic spells and monstrous curses, but one in which love appears as a human force triumphing over the most terrible powers.

Swan Lake, one of the masterpieces of theatrical dance, continues to exist as an exceptional example of the style and expressive modes of a whole epoch of dance. It offers a brilliant display of academic technique as well as integrating perfectly the personification of a woman and swan in the language of dance.

⌚ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm, February 20 to 24
 ➔ National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), 2 Chang'an Jie, Xicheng
 💎 180 - 1,280 yuan
 ☎ 18600208126
 ✉ book-holiday@hotmail.com
 🌐 chncpa.org

COMMUNITY

Finance and Commerce

 A quality, fun & celebratory social networking evening for Business people, Executives, Entrepreneurs, Lawyers, Finance professionals, Investors, Real Estate experts, Global Mobility & the Professions.
 Venue: Marriott Beijing Northeast

23 September
7:30pm

Finance & Commerce Networking Evening

The FC Group series of social networking events is special in that it is dynamic. Join each month to discover different businesses and find new ways to increase benefits.

Join a group of friendly and like-

minded professionals, meet potential partners or clients, exchange ideas and grow your business.

The event is open to everyone, but it is especially designed for business people, real estate professionals, executives, investors, finance professionals, lawyers, relocation agents, entrepreneurs and anyone who wants to explore business opportunities in Beijing.

⌚ 7:30 pm - 10:30 pm, February 24
 ➔ Beijing Marriott Hotel Northeast, 26A Xiaoyun Lu, Chaoyang
 💎 100 yuan for discount card holders; 110 yuan with pre-pay via Yoopay; 125 yuan with online RSVP (mail info@fcgroup.org or text 13911098002 before August 26); 175 yuan for walk-ins
 ☎ (010) 5927 8888
 ✉ info@fcgroup.org
 🌐 fcgroup.org

DINING



Grand Living on Valentine's Day

Pamper your sweetheart with Champagne, chocolates and a romantic getaway to the Grand Hyatt Beijing this Valentine's Day. The Hyatt's Grand Living on Valentine's Day Package offers a memorable evening that begins with an exclusive limousine service from home to the hotel. During the journey, enjoy a glass of Mo & Chandon Brut Imperial with your loved one in the limousine. Upon arrival, the couple will be brought to the newly remodeled Club Suite, which features a romantic set up with rose petals and chocolate-dipped strawberries.

⌚ 5 pm, February 13
 ➔ Grand Hyatt Beijing, Oriental Plaza, 1 Chang'an Jie, Dongcheng
 💎 4,888 yuan (15 percent service fee)
 ☎ (010) 8518 1234
 ✉ beijing.grand@hyatt.com
 🌐 grandhyattbj.com



Love on the Square: Valentine's Celebrations at Capital M

Love is in the air and on the Square this Valentine's Day at Capital M. We've created a delectable, five-course Valentine's

menu that's served among our roaring fireplaces that overlook the city's most breathtaking view.

The Valentine's menu starts with a little flirtation: love bites and passionate pink Prosecco, followed by a Demitasse of creamy Jerusalem artichoke soup. Seductive starters include Capital M's favorite aphrodisiac, foie gras Terrine, a pretty-in-pink salmon gravlax or an organic salad strewn with flowers. The main event features a tender grilled fillet of Australian beef, pan-fried Icelandic halibut or a North African pie of artichokes, fresh cheese, green olives and preserved lemons. And for a sweet, sensual ending, its passionate platter includes passion fruit soufflé, passion fruit ice cream and passion fruit tarts.

⌚ 5:30 - 10 pm, February 14
 ➔ Capital M, 3/F, 2 Qianmen Pedestrian Street, Chongwen
 💎 488 yuan per person
 ☎ (010) 6702 2727
 🌐 capital-m-beijing.com

TRAVEL



Yu County's Ancient Walled Towns and Iron Fireworks

Chinese New Year is the best time to visit Yu County, so Beijing Hikers is doing two trips. Book early, because it is expected to be popular!

Yu County is a four-hour drive northwest from Beijing. The area is home to ancient pagodas, temples, pavilions and large gates and plaques that preserve traces of the Zhou, Liao, Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties.

On this two-day trip you'll walk the streets of the well-preserved ancient city of Yuxian, visit the pavilions and pagodas, as well as visit Jimingyi, the remnants of a Ming Dynasty postal relay center. On the first evening, the group will take in a performance that includes Da Shu Hua, a 300-year old local tradition that translates as "Beating Trees into Flowers" and involves molten iron being flung against the city walls in lieu of a fireworks display.

We did some extra scouting for this trip and found a nice countryside walk for the last day. It's a good way to see what it's like in really rural China.

⌚ 8:30 am - 7:30 pm, February 21 and 22
 ➔ Beijing Hikers, Room 601, Building 2, Xinhualian Ligang, 26 Jiuxianqiao Zhong Lu, Chaoyang
 💎 1,800 yuan (1,620 yuan for members, 1,200 yuan for under 12)
 ☎ (010) 6432 2786
 ✉ info@beijinghikers.com
 🌐 beijinghikers.com

HOLIDAY GIFTS



Traditional Treats for Gifts



BY DIAO DIAO

February 18 marks the last day of the 2014 lunar year and the beginning of Spring Festival. Chinese people have a long tradition of taking gifts and snacks to elder family members during the first week of the holiday.

While most people know about Jingbajian, a set of eight cakes with special meanings that is a popular festival gift, the older generation prefers a box of their favorite Beijing cakes wrapped in a red box.

Sweets boxes usually contain lüdaguan and aiwowo, in addition to other popular Beijing sweets like saqima, niushebing, misandao, wife cakes, green bean cakes, jujube cakes, lotus cakes, pumpkin cakes and cookies. Boxes are usually sold according to their weight.

Saqima was a traditional royal treat during the Qing Dynasty before becoming associated with the Manchu ethnic group. Its sweet and salty ropes of dough are covered with a flaky crust and stuffed with

nuts and dried fruits.

Niushebing, named for their similar appearance to a cow's tongue, have a crispy, savory coating and sweet filling. Today they are also made in salty flavors.

Misandao is a traditional treat of the Han ethnicity named for its three-bladed shape.

Wife cakes, or laopobing, may be the most familiar for foreigners. The cakes were created by Zhu Yuanzhang, wife of the first Emperor of the Ming Dynasty. She came up with the idea by mixing all the ingredients she had, crushing them into a paste and cooking them into round plain cake to give to soldiers.

Taosu cookies are one of the few Han ethnic foods that are popular both North and South of the Yangtze River. The cookies are dry, crispy and sweet with a hint of walnut flavor.

Unlike the boxy or round pumpkin and green bean cakes, lotus paste cakes and jujube cakes are pressed into a flower shape with the filling hidden in the petals. ■

MAKE YOUR OWN WITH THIS RECIPE

Make Your Own Sugar-Free Wangao

BY DIAO DIAO

Wangao is a famous snack of the Han ethnic group. The cakes are yellow, soft and easy for both the elderly and young to digest. Many parents often make wangao for their babies.

Wangao is made of raw rice and peanut paste. The name comes from the practice of using a bowl or cup to shape the paste while steaming.



Ingredients:

- ☐ 100g rice
- ☐ 50g peanuts
- ☐ 400g sugar
- ☐ water
- ☐ baking powder
- ☐ black sesame

The Steps:

1. Soak the rice in water for 30 minutes.
2. Heat the peanuts in a pan without oil. When they turn black, shut off the flame and remove the burned skins.
3. Put three cups of water, soft rice and cooked peanuts into the mixer. Beat until smooth.
4. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add the paste and reduce to a medium flame. Add water when it starts to thicken and keep stirring. Turn off the heat when it starts to boil. The mijiang is done.
5. Separate the mijiang into small cups. Top with black sesame and steam for 10 minutes.

Time-Honored Daoxiangcun Treats

BY DIAO DIAO

Founded in 1895, Daoxiangcun may be the oldest cake shop in Beijing. Its first location was near Qianmen, where it was the favorite haunt of famous writers such as Lu Xun.

Today there are more than 30 Daoxiangcun outlets throughout the city and its treats – especially its Chinese pastries – remain popular.

The chain is famous for maintaining its traditional taste, and families often go to Daoxiangcun each festival to buy a box of treats for elder members.

While many office workers are accustomed to eating foreign breakfasts of eggs and bacon, many locals still prefer soft cakes from Daoxiangcun as an alternative to salty favorites like tofu jelly.

Most of the cakes are mildly sweet, with the savory niushebing being the chain's most popular. Compared with other shops' niushebing, Daoxiangcun offers a smoother stuffing. The chain's secret recipe has never been duplicated in more than 100 years of business.

Other favorites include sweet shaoxing made of sesame paste, lüdaguan made of green bean paste and soft rou-song cakes made of floss and cream.

Daoxiangcun also makes seasonal mooncakes and zongzi, but they are less popular than its more traditional regular offerings. ■



Daoxiangcun sweet box



Niushebing



Sweet shaoxing

Photos by dianping.com

Daoxiangcun

19 Chaoyangmenwai Dajie, Chaoyang
8:30 am-8:30 pm